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[redacted] Series B
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19 OCT 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Programs Evaluation

SUBJECT : CIA's Role in the National Reconnaissance Programs

1. From the first thoughts of the U-2 Program, which began its fermentation in late 1954, Dr. Edwin Land, who was then Chairman of Project 3 - Technological Capabilities Panel, Office of Defense Mobilization, prepared a paper which recommended to the Director of Central Intelligence that CIA undertake an overflight activity of the Soviet Union. The Land Panel agreed that there were many reasons why the activity of overflights was appropriate for CIA. Because no statesman, as Land put it, could run the risk of provocation towards war and for the Air Force to engage in a program of that sort would seem rather dangerous, the Panel recommended that CIA, as a civilian organization, undertake a covert program of selected flights. Thus from the very beginning, CIA's role in the program was to lend an unaggressive and unmilitaristic nature to overflights. It was this philosophy, conceived in early days, that has prevailed to the present and has retained for CIA the jurisdiction for overflights of denied territories. The validity and appropriateness of this philosophy was put to test following the 1 May 1960 incident. The USSR attempted, feebly at first, to link that action to the Pentagon, but it soon had to content itself to air this issue in the arena of a spy trial. Although world opinion may have been mixed regarding the propriety of such an activity, few measured that action in the realm of a war-like gesture. Hence, the fact that CIA was behind the U-2 program protected the United States Government from official renunciation for a militaristic or aggressive action. It is not proposed here and now that the Air Force does not possess the capability to conduct a U-2 program of its own any more than that precept was challenged in late 1954. What was true at that time remains equally valid today, namely, if the United States Government wishes to engage in overflight activities over denied hostile territory, it had best equip itself to minimize attribution to an official act of the United States Government, particularly through the mechanism of one of its armed forces.

NRO review(s) completed.

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2. We are rapidly approaching operational readiness of the OXCART program. Can we properly retain for that program CIA's jurisdiction which was established for the U-2 program? Again it is conceded that the United States Air Force ably retains an in-house capability to conduct such a program. If, as planned, the OXCART vehicle is launched [redacted] and returns to that base following overflight with the aid of aerial refueling, the security measures which will be required are minimal and well within the capability of the United States Air Force. No intelligent person will contest that technically the Air Force possesses a capability at least equal to CIA to manage and carry out such a mission. The sole reason for CIA's involvement can only be predicated upon the necessity of the U.S. Government to avoid an international incident perpetrated by one of its members of the armed forces. Again, the Powers case points up the wisdom of the pilot being employed by CIA, thus relegating the incident in international minds to the accepted practice of espionage among nations.

3. One thing, however, which cannot be overlooked in the development and management of any reconnaissance activity is the successful cloak of security which CIA can enwrap a program. Again, we can point to the U-2, which even though exposed following the 1 May 1960 incident, has been successfully employed in continuing overflight reconnaissance without breach of security or national embarrassment. The OXCART program, tremendous in scope, has been a masterful achievement in protecting the knowledgeability of that program. We think it is a fair statement of fact that CIA is without peers in the U.S. Government in security success.

4. In attempting to measure the role which CIA can play in the reconnaissance programs of the Government, let us look at the record and achievements which CIA has accomplished. We are all well aware of the U-2 program, which took 9 months from contractual go-ahead of the U-2 until its first flight, and some 10 months after the first flight operational units had been deployed overseas and the first overflight of the Soviet Bloc countries had been accomplished. The OXCART program took 26 months in preliminary studies and an additional 29 months before the first aircraft was completed. Two months later the first flight was achieved and 6 months following

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that first flight the aircraft reached Mach 2. Comparing this achievement to the Air Force's B-58 and B-70 programs, the B-58 took 32 months in preliminary studies and an additional 50 months before their first aircraft was completed. One month later the first flight was accomplished and 8 months following that the aircraft reached Mach 2. The B-70 program, which already has spent more money than the OXCART, KEDLOCK [redacted] programs combined, took 38 months in preliminary studies and an additional 69 months have passed since contractual go-ahead and the first aircraft has yet to be completed. It is not difficult to suggest on reviewing these statistics that CIA might take justifiable pride in its management of aircraft developmental programs, as well as to infer that possibly CIA methods and attention given to developmental programs might have a "leg up" on those of the standardized Air Force approach. Additionally, let us look at the satellite programs. In July of this year the Air Force produced its first picture recovered from satellite photography. This is some three years after CIA accomplished its first successful satellite reconnaissance. The contributions and achievements which CIA has given to our national reconnaissance program certainly attest to the strong possibility that CIA is, in fact, a leader in our national reconnaissance effort. In the face of this history it would seem criminal to divorce this Agency from further participation in this field.

5. With the advent of the National Reconnaissance Office and the machinations which transpired since its foundation, we now find CIA virtually severed from engaging in reconnaissance activities other than those such as IDEALIST and OXCART which it has sired from the outset. With the National Reconnaissance Office and Staff primarily manned by Air Force personnel, who are apparently oriented and dedicated to the extinction of CIA's role in the national reconnaissance, a bright future does not loom for CIA. This is especially true when one considers that funds for the conduct of the National Reconnaissance Program are controlled by these same Air Force people. CIA has experienced to date the subjugation of its activities and endeavors to the whims and desires of those DOD personnel controlling the National Reconnaissance Program funds. It is readily recognized that the

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National Reconnaissance Program has achieved little in the proper organization of our reconnaissance efforts, but more readily has lent itself to continuing skirmishes and harangues which has driven CIA and the Air Force further apart from mutual cooperation. The fact that we are now on our third or fourth NRO Agreement confirms that little has been accomplished towards the desired goal of that organization. In an effort to salvage that organization, CIA has recently designated a Deputy Director/NRO who finds himself now ignored and circumvented in the decision making of that Office. Many will agree that it is noble and righteous to attempt to organize all the reconnaissance efforts of the U.S. Government under the management of a single office. Parochialism and petty jealousies, however, have prevented the fruition of any meaningful organization. It is submitted, and I think rightly so, that CIA and the Department of Defense have gone too far in the establishment of the National Reconnaissance Office to gracefully withdraw without further severing the interface so necessary between CIA and the Department of Defense in our national reconnaissance efforts.

6. Should the DCI in an effort to streamline CIA's budget look with some disfavor at the prospect of huge sums of monies necessary to conduct satellite and aircraft reconnaissance programs being charged against the Central Intelligence Agency, it is recognizable that he would welcome such an instrument as the National Reconnaissance Office to bear the brunt of the financial burden for the national reconnaissance programs. Contemporaneously, however, with such a settlement the question arises as to how CIA can relinquish control of the funds for such a program and at the same time insure that the national reconnaissance effort will be conducted according to the combined desires of the United States Intelligence Community. Short of nominating a CIA employee as Director of the National Reconnaissance Program, there are a few avenues left to the DCI. A possible solution would be for the DCI to call upon the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to review the National Reconnaissance Program and make recommendations to him relative to its organization, composition, management, funding, and responsibilities. Should the FIAB recognize the need for CIA's active participation, if not managerial role, in our National Reconnaissance Program, the Director's defense of an enlarged budget, such as reconnaissance programs necessitate, could

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readily look to the recommendation of the FIAB and the requirement that CIA manage and control these programs in behalf of the entire intelligence community. The Purcell Panel which recently reviewed future satellite reconnaissance operations at the request of the DCI pointed out in its summary to Mr. McCone that "the compact and competent management organization, under which the present operational systems were developed, we believe has contributed largely to the past success of the program. The Panel did not consider at this time the effect of recent changes in the management structure (i. e., the arrival of the NRO). It recommends, however, that this subject be continually reviewed to ensure that clearness of focus and purpose, originally achieved, has not been diffused." In our interpretation then, in these words the Purcell Panel paid tribute to the CIA reconnaissance efforts and at the same time expressed their hope that the NRO would not jeopardize or alter the success which CIA had achieved to date.

7. One fact of life which cannot be ignored is that CIA over the years has demonstrated a policy of austerity in the funding and personnel manning of its reconnaissance endeavors. We have manned units at our various detachments with far fewer people than would SAC under similar circumstances. The utilization of "skunk works" in our contractors' facilities, as well as the philosophy of contracting and monitoring of our programs has greatly contributed to a comparatively "bargain price" in all our endeavors. Although the Director by transferring our reconnaissance programs to DOD may effectively reduce the budget of CIA, he might very well by this action contribute to the increase of the overall Federal budget by submitting our austere programs to the enlarged spending and over-manning of the DOD.

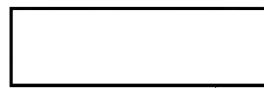
8. A final point which should not be overlooked is the modus operandi which CIA employs in not only the conduct of its reconnaissance programs but in the management of its research and development activities. The entire CIA operation is now in concert with the highest security practices and covert principles. Although this attribute was not a major consideration when the U-2 program was earmarked for CIA, the vast experience and finesse which CIA has amassed in the conduct of covert reconnaissance operations should make it an odds

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on favorite as a candidate for future national reconnaissance activities. We feel relatively safe to suggest that the Air Force, in organization, tradition and temperament, cannot compete with CIA in this regard.

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JOHN N. McMAHON

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JNMcM: [redacted] (9 Oct 63)

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